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The *Jahmiyyah* and *Mu‘tazilah*—and the Rise of the *Kullābiyyah*, *Ashā‘irah* and *Māturīdiyyah*

There are verses in the Qur’ān that affirm for Allāh the Discretionary Attributes²² such as His Pleasure, Anger, Displeasure, Hatred, Abhorrence, and so on. So, He (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) becomes angry and pleased but not like any of His creation:

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ ۚ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ ﴿٧﴾

“There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the Hearing, the Seeing.”

And the same applies to the other Attributes such as His Displeasure, His Wrath, His Hatred, His Abhorrence and His Anger—all these Discretionary Attributes befit the Majesty of Allāh and His Exaltedness. *Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamā‘ah* affirm all these Attributes because they are reported in the Quranic verses and Prophetic narrations (*Aḥādīth*). These Attributes are sometimes mentioned in the past

²² The Arabic term for Discretionary Attributes is *Aṣ-Ṣifāt Al-Ikhtiāriyyah* (or *Aṣ-Ṣifāt Al-Fi‘liyyah*). These Attributes are subject to Allāh’s discretion, He (تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى) does what He Wills whenever He Wills—and if He so Wills, He does not do them. So, He (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) Ascended (*Al-Istiwā*) over His Throne, as He (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) said, “**The Most Merciful ascended over the Throne**” (*Tāhā*: 5), and His Coming (*Al-Majī*) on the Day of Resurrection, as He (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) said, “**And your Lord comes with the Angels in rows.**” See the introduction to *Lum‘at al-I‘tiqād al-Hādī ilā Sabīl al-Rashād* of Imām Muwaffiq Ad-Dīn Ibn Qudāmah Al-Maqdisī (d. 620 AH), with the explanation of *Al-‘Allāmah* Muḥammad ibn Ṣālih al-‘Uthaimīn (d. 1421 AH), pp. 20-27.

tense, sometimes in the present or future tense, and sometimes as verbal nouns.

So, these Discretionary Attributes are established and affirmed for Allāh (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) as He has affirmed them for Himself and as the Messenger (صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) has affirmed them for Him. And what we intend by the term Discretionary Attributes are those Attributes established with the Self (Aẓ-Zāt) of Allāh, by His Will, Intent and Power.

The Discretionary Attributes have been a point of contention since the early centuries of Islām. The early sects which proclaimed that the Discretionary Attributes must be negated [from Allāh] included the *Kullābiyyah*—and before them, the *Jahmiyyah* and *Mu‘tazilah* called to the same negation.

The *Mu‘tazilah* made the assertion that the Speech of Allāh is created, and they claimed that all the Discretionary Attributes are created and detached from Him. So, according to the *Mu‘tazilah*, His Anger is created and detached from Him—they would say that His Anger is the effect that anger has. Likewise, with Allāh’s Pleasure, they said it is created and detached from Him—it is a metaphor for bounty, or favour, or goodness, and so on. Their intent, by inventing these metaphors, was to claim that these Discretionary Attributes are created and detached from Him.

Then ‘Abdullāh Ibn Kullāb came along with speech that refuted the aforementioned sects. He affirmed that which is proven by the Book and *Sunnah* of affirmation.

He was the leader of the of the Speculative Theologians (*Al-Mu-takallimūn*) of Basra in his time. His name was Abu Muḥammad ‘Abdullāh Ibn Sa‘īd Ibn Kullāb Al-Qaṭṭān Al-Baṣrī, he died a year before Imām Ahmad (رَحِمَهُ اللّٰهُ) in 240 AH. He was the first to speak with the

innovation of ascribing to Allāh ‘**the eternal un-uttered speech**’ (*al-kalām an-nafsī al-qadīm*). He negated the Discretionary Actions of Allāh. His followers are called the *Kullābiyyah*.²³ *Shaikhul-Islām* Ibn Taymiyyah said about him:

He believed that the Lord should not be described with matters at His Discretion that are connected to His Ability and Will; and he believed that Allāh does not speak according to His Will and Ability; that He does not love His servant and become pleased with him after having *īmān* in Him (تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى) and obedience to Him; nor does He get angry with a person and displeased after he disbelieves in Him and disobeys Him. Rather, according to Ibn Kullāb, Allāh’s Love, Pleasure, Anger, Displeasure for someone is based upon His Knowledge that he will die as either a believer or an unbeliever—and Allāh did does not speak with speech after speech (or words after words).²⁴

So, he attempted to tread a ‘middle path’ by claiming that the Attributes that are referred to as Discretionary are not established with the Self (*Az-Zāt*) of Allāh by His Will and Ability. Rather they are Eternal Attributes that do not change. So, Ibn Kullāb asserted that the Anger of Allāh is eternal (and unchanging), His Pleasure is eternal (and unchanging), and His Dislike is eternal (and unchanging).²⁵ Alongside this, he falsely interpreted these Attributes (*ta’wīl*) by asserting that all of them refer to the Attribute of the Intent of Allāh (i.e., *Al-Irādah*). And this is the belief of the *Ashā‘irah* and *Māturīdiyyah*, i.e., that Allāh’s Anger is His Intent to punish, Allāh’s Pleasure is His Intent to bestow goodness, and so on. So, they connect these

²³ See *Al-Wāfi bil-Wafayāt* 17/104, and *Siyar A’lām an-Nubalā’* 11/174.

²⁴ See *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā*, 7/662.

²⁵ This will be discussed in greater detail in a later chapter, *inshā’ Allāh*.

eternal unchanging Attributes to the Intent of Allāh. So, the *Ashā'irah* and *Māturīdiyyah* oppose *Ahlu-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah* in this subject matter from two angles:

Firstly: They negate the Discretionary Attributes by claiming that these Attributes are eternal, unchanging, and not established with the Self of Allāh according to His Will, Discretion and Choice.

Secondly: They claim that the Attribute, regardless, does not befit Allāh, so they interpreted it to mean His *Irādah* (Intent).

These sects in all their various orientations are opposers of the Book and *Sunnah* as it relates to the Discretionary Attributes of Allāh. *Ahlu-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah* (*As-Salafiyyūn*) on the other hand affirm whatever is proven by the Revealed Texts in affirmation of the Attributes of Pleasure and Anger such as in the saying of Allāh (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى):

رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ لِمَنِ حَشِيَ رَبُّهُ ۝ (A)

“Allāh is be Pleased with them, and they with Him. That is for him who fears his Lord.”²⁶

And He (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) stated:

لَقَدْ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ يُبَايِعُونَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ

“Indeed, Allāh was Pleased with the believers when they gave the pledge to you, O Prophet, under the tree.”²⁷

It is proven from this verse that the time of the Pleasure of Allāh was at the point of the pledge just as He (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) said, ‘**When they gave the pledge to you O Prophet.**’ So, the word ‘when’ (Arabic: إِذْ)

²⁶ Sūrah al-Bayyinah: 8.

²⁷ Sūrah al-Fath: 18.

refers to a point in time when an event is taking place as the scholars of Arabic language have pointed out.²⁸ So it is apparent that the Pleasure of Allāh for the believers was not in eternity, rather it was at the point of the pledge. Likewise, with the verse in Sūrah an-Nisā' where Allāh (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) said:

وَمَنْ يَقْتُلْ مُؤْمِنًا مُتَعَمِّدًا فَجَزَاؤُهُ جَهَنَّمُ خَالِدًا فِيهَا وَغَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ
وَلَعَنَهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُ عَذَابًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٩٣﴾

“And whoever kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell to abide therein; and the Anger of Allāh and His Curse are upon him, and a great punishment is prepared for him.”²⁹

This verse affirms for Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) the Attribute of Anger, and the Anger of Allāh is as the result of the killing because He (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) said, ‘whoever kills a believer intentionally’. So, this is the beginning of the verse which is followed by, ‘his recompense is Hell to abide therein; and the Anger of Allāh and His Curse are upon him, and a great punishment is prepared for him.’ Therefore, the occurrence of Allāh’s Anger and Curse comes after the intentional killing of a believer, and the recompense of Hell is after his falling into the major sin. This is rejected by the *Kullābiyyah* and the *Ash‘ariyyah*. They hold that Allāh does not become Pleased and Angry at certain points in time, instead His Anger and Pleasure is eternal and unchanging. Furthermore, His Anger is His Intent to punish, and His Pleasure is His Intent to reward—and this is what is referred to as the *ta’wīl* (or false interpretation) of the Ash‘arīs, as we shall discuss in a later chapter.

²⁸ See *Alfiyat Ibn Mālik ma’a Sharḥ Ibn ‘Aqīl*, 2/192.

²⁹ Sūrah al-Nisā’: 93.

Thus, we see that the Qur'ān proves the affirmation of the numerous Discretionary Attributes, and that these Attributes are established with the Self of Allāh as He Wills, and by His Ability.